

Exclusive Topics for JAPAN AUTUMN INTERNATIONAL 2023 2nd Edition



October 2023

The Japan Racing Association

The effects of Covid-19 pandemic, which has seriously impacted the global horse racing industry since early 2020, have gradually subsided in Japan as restrictions aimed at containing the disease have been lifted to allow business to return to normal. The Japanese government downgraded the disease from Class 2 to Class 5 on May 8, placing COVID-19 in the same category as seasonal influenza under the nation's Infectious Diseases Control Law.

In response, fans have returned to racetracks and off-track facilities of both the JRA and NAR (National Association of Racing; local public racing) on levels not seen since before February 2020, with some exceptions. Total attendance at JRA racetracks between January 1 and October 1 was over 3.11 million, a huge increase of more than 81% from the previous year. For Japanese Derby Day at Tokyo Racecourse on May 28, which required tickets to be purchased online, nearly 72,000 people applied.

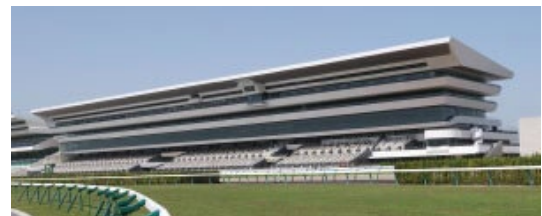
Meanwhile, wagering revenue as of October 1 amounted to nearly ¥2,393.9 billion, a slight decrease of 0.25% from the previous year. From 2011, when JRA revenue hit bottom following the Great East Japan Earthquake in northeastern Japan, wagering grew year-on-year for 11 consecutive years to 2022, even during the pandemic. With social and economic activity having returned to pre-pandemic levels, competition from other leisure activities has increased, and rising prices for natural resources and other goods following Russia's invasion of Ukraine is also thought to have had an impact.

Whereas racing wagering now appears to have hit a ceiling, the breeding industry continues to flourish. The Select Sale (Japan Racing Horse Association) held on July 10 and 11 in Tomakomai, Hokkaido, recorded total sales of ¥28,145 million (excluding taxes, same hereinafter), up 9.2% from the previous year, with a clearance rate of 96.0%. Among yearlings, 216 out of 222 registered were

sold, an astonishing clearance rate of 97.3%. The rate for foals fell to 94.8%, but a foal by Contrail out of Conviction sold for ¥520 million, the third highest price ever for a foal. Contrail (JPN, H6, by Deep Impact) was an undefeated Triple Crown winner in 2020 who was retired to stud after winning the Japan Cup the following year. All 20 foals in his first crop, born in 2023, sold in the Select Sale for a combined ¥2,572 million, or about ¥128.6 million per horse.

The Select Sale was not the only event to enjoy such success, with the Hokkaido Sale (Hidaka Horse Breeders Association) turning in equally impressive results. The Selection Sale for yearlings, held on July 25 and 26, achieved a record clearance rate of 91.9% and saw total sales increase by 16.4% to ¥5,646.7 million. One yearling sold for ¥94 million yen, second highest in Selection Sale history, while over 1,000 yearlings registered for the Summer Sale (August 21–25) brought in ¥7,508.5 million, up 17.6%. Excluding the October Sale, the Hokkaido Sale amassed a grand total of ¥15,258.2 million, topping last year's ¥14,314.9 million.

On the racing side, JRA's Kyoto Racecourse finally completed a major renovation that began in November 2020 and resumed racing on April 22 after a 2.5-year hiatus. The prestigious Tenno Sho (Spring), the first G1 event to be held after the renovation, attracted 45,580 spectators on April 30. This year has also marked the 100th anniversary of the promulgation of the Horse Racing Act, which legalized horse racing and wagering in Japan, and was commemorated with various ceremonies and special events.



Kyoto Racecourse

(contributed by Kenichi Nomoto, Nikkei)



Mama Cocha,
winner of 2023 Sprinters Stakes

In the Sprinters Stakes (1,200m) in October, JRA's first fall G1 event, third-favorite **Mama Cocha (JPN, F4, by Kurofune)** landed her inaugural G1 title. The Kurofune filly and **Mad Cool (IRE, C4, by Dark Angel)**, who finished second, are both among the list of nominations for the Hong Kong Sprint (G1, 1,200m) on December 10. **Pixie Knight (JPN, H5, by Maurice)**, the 2021 Sprinters Stakes champion but eighth this year, will also run in the Hong Kong Sprint or perhaps the Hong Kong Mile (G1, 1,600m).

Fourth-placed **Jasper Krone (USA, C4, by Frosted)** will head to the United States for the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1, 1,000m) on November 4. Fifth-place finisher **Meikei Yell (JPN, M5, by Mikki Isle)** will also fly to America for either the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint or the Filly & Mare Sprint (G1, dirt, 1,400m). Nine runners will be contesting the Breeder's Cup this year, including **Ecoro Neo (USA, C2, by Bernardini)**, entered in the BC Juvenile (G1, dirt, 1,700m); **Ushba Tesoro (JPN, H6,**

by Orfevre) and **Derma Sotogake (JPN, C3, by Mind Your Biscuits)**, both entered in the BC Classic (G1, dirt, 2,000m); **Shahryar (JPN, H5, by Deep Impact)**, entered in the BC Turf (G1, 2,400m); **Songline (JPN, M5, by Kizuna)** and **Win Carnelian (JPN, H6, by Screen Hero)**, both entered in the BC Mile (G1, 1,600m); and **Win Marilyn (JPN, M6, by Screen Hero)**, entered in the BC Filly & Mare Turf (G1, 2,000m).

Elton Barows (JPN, C3, by Deep Brillante) captured a narrow victory in the Mainichi Okan (G2, 1,800m) on October 8, holding off runner-up **Songline** by a nose for his second consecutive grade-race title following the Radio Nikkei Sho (G3, 1,800m) in July. The Deep Brillante colt will make his first G1 challenge in the Mile Championship on November 19 in which 2021 NHK Mile Cup (G1, 1,600m) victor **Schnell Meister (GER, H5, by Kingman)**, who was a nose behind in third in the Mainichi Okan, is hoped to turn the tables this time and claim his second G1 victory.



Elton Barows,
winner of 2023 Mainichi Okan



Pradaria,
winner of 2023 Kyoto Daishoten

The Kyoto Daishoten (G2, 2,400m) on October 9 was won by fifth favorite **Pradaria (JPN, C4, by Deep Impact)**, who marked his second grade-race victory, following last year's Aoba Sho (G2, 2,400m), only a day after his sire Deep Impact scored a JRA record 2,750 progeny wins to surpass Sunday Silence (Deep Impact's sire). **Pradaria** is expected to make his next start in the Japan Cup (G1, 2,400m) on November 26 or head for the Hong Kong Vase (G1, 2,400m) in December. **Vela Azul (JPN, H6, by Eishin**

Flash), seventh in the Kyoto Daishoten, will return to the Japan Cup in a bid to defend his title following last year's win.

Lemon Pop (USA, H5, by Lemon Drop Kid), winner of the February Stakes (G1, dirt, 1,600m), claimed the Mile Championship Nambu Hai (dirt, 1,600m) by an overwhelming 2.0 seconds. **Cafe Pharoah (USA, H6, by American Pharoah)**, winner of back-to-back February Stakes in 2021-22, finished fifth, while 2022 Satsuki Sho (Japanese 2000 Guineas, G1, 2,000m) champion **Geoglyph (JPN, C4, by Drefong)** came in ninth. **Lemon Pop** will aim for his second JRA-G1 title in the Champions Cup (G1, dirt, 1,800m) on December 3, joined by **Hagino Alegrias (JPN, H6, by Kizuna)**, who claimed his second-graded title in the Sirius Stakes (G3, dirt, 2,000m) on September 30.



Lemon Pop,
winner of 2023 February Stakes



Divina,
winner of 2023 Fuchu Himba Stakes

Divina (JPN, M5, by Maurice) marked her first grade-race title in a wire-to-wire victory in the Fuchu Himba Stakes (G2, 1,800m) on October 14. The five-year-old mare out of Verxina, winner of the Victoria Mile in 2013 and 2014, will head for the Queen Elizabeth II Cup (G1, 2,200m) on November 12 along with **Rouge Eveil (JPN, F4, by Just a Way)** and **Lilac (JPN, F4, by Orfevre)**, second and third respectively in the Fuchu Himba.

Liberty Island (JPN, F3, by Duramente) proved her class in the Shuka Sho (G1, 2,000m) on October 15, assuming command before entering the straight and pulling away comfortably for a length victory, making her the seventh filly overall, and the first since Daring Tact, to claim all three Triple Crown races. The Duramente filly will race against mixed field of older G1 rivals in the Japan Cup, where she will bid to become the first three-year-old filly winner since Almond Eye in 2018. **Harper (JPN, F3, by Heart's Cry)** and **Dura (JPN, F3, by Duramente)**, respectively third and fourth in the Shuka Sho, will head to the Queen Elizabeth II Cup.



Liberty Island,
winner of 2023 Shuka Sho



Namur, winner of 2023 Fuji Stakes

Namur (JPN, F4, by Harbinger) matched expectations as race favorite in the Fuji Stakes (G2, 1,600m) on October 21, registering her second grade-race title following last year's Tulip Sho (G2, 1,600m). While the Fuji Stakes is intended as a prep towards the Mile Championship, the Queen Elizabeth II Cup could be the filly's next start. Meanwhile, 2022 Best Sprinter or Miler **Serifos (JPN, C4, by Daiwa Major)**, who was scheduled to make his fall comeback in the Fuji Stakes but withdrawn due to health reasons,

will head directly to the Mile Championship as defending champion.

Durezza (JPN, C3, by Duramente) turned in a classy performance against a strong field of proven three-year-olds in his first grade-race challenge, and at long distance no less, in the Kikuka Sho (Japanese St. Leger, G1, 3,000m) on October 22, showing both speed and stamina to pull away from both Tokyo Yushun (Japanese Derby, G1, 2,400m) champion **Tastiera (JPN, C3, by Satono Crown)** and Satsuki Sho victor **Sol Oriens (JPN, C3, by Kitasan Black)**, neither of whom threatened the winner by finishing second by 3-1/2 lengths and third by five respectively. **Durezza's** first grade-race and G1 victory, which extended his winning streak to five since breaking his maiden in his second start as a two-year-old, positions him as the



Durezza, winner of 2023 Kikuka Sho

most prominent colt of his generation.

On the day after **Mama Cocha** won the Sprinters Stakes, the retirement of her full sister **Sodashi (JPN, M5, by Kurofuno)** was announced. The only pure white horse to land not just one but three G1 titles at a mile, including the 2021 Oka Sho (Japanese 1000 Guineas), sustained a leg problem following a seventh-place finish in the Yasuda Kinen (G1, 1,600m) in June. Another talented mare, **Daring Tact (JPN, M6, by Epiphaneia)**, the 2020 triple crown winning filly, who had been sidelined after a fourth-place finish in last year's Japan Cup, was also retired from racing. Both mares will assume broodmare duties—**Sodashi** at Northern Farm and **Daring Tact** going to Okada Stud next spring.